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ABSTRACT

The Assessment Tools for Adult Education project was designed to provide training and support to staff of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) funded programs to help them use assessment tools and procedures to document the learning gains of the adult students they serve. The following candidate assessment instruments for reporting learning gains were pilot tested: (1) the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised; (2) the Wonderlic Basic Skills Test; and (3) the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). All three assessment instruments were deemed usable by a variety of ABLE-funded programs and were added to Pennsylvania's list of standardized assessments approved for reporting adult learner educational gain data. A total of 68 participants from 38 state agencies received CASAS initial training, and 37 participants from 17 agencies received CASAS advanced training. Information about and technical assistance on the CASAS was provided to ABLE agencies throughout the project year. Four Pennsylvania-based CASAS trainers were advanced toward becoming certified state-level CASAS trainers. (The following items are appended: the pilot test application form; a list of agencies participating in the pilot test; and draft educational gain standards for the pilot instruments.) (MN)

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ED 455 364

Assessment Tools for Adult Education

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Abstract **Contract Number: 098-00-0010**

Grant Recipient:
Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11, Adult Education and Job Training Center
MCIDC Plaza, Building 58
6395 SR 103 North
Lewistown, PA 17044
(717) 248-4942

Program Name: Assessment Tools for Adult Education
Grant Allocation: $75,000
Project Period: July 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000
Project Director: Carol Shefrin

Project Purpose: This project provided training and support to staff of ABLE-funded programs to help them utilize assessment tools and procedures to effectively document the learning gains of the adult students they serve.

Project Outcomes: The project 1) pilot tested three candidate assessment instruments for reporting of learning gains, 2) expanded training and technical assistance opportunities for the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) through the Training Module Project, and 3) continued development of state-based CASAS trainers through the Training Module Project.

Impact: Results of the pilot test revealed that the three assessment instruments (Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, the Wonderlic Basic Skills Test, and the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test) were usable by a variety of ABLE-funded programs and useful for reporting learning gains of adult students. In response to the pilot test, the Bureau of ABLE added these three instruments to the list of standardized assessments approved for reporting adult learner educational gain data. Thirty-eight agencies (68 participants) received CASAS Initial Training; 17 agencies (37 participants) received CASAS Advanced Training. Information about and technical assistance on CASAS was provided to ABLE agencies throughout the project year. Four Pennsylvania-based CASAS trainers were advanced toward becoming certified state-level CASAS trainers for Pennsylvania.

Products or Training Developed: A final report summarizes project activities, results, and impact.

Products Available From: the AdvancE State Literacy Resource Center

Project Continuation and/or Future Implications: The project provided a model for how additional candidate instruments may be pilot-tested for use by ABLE agencies in the future. CASAS training was smoothly integrated into an existing statewide delivery structure provided by the Training Module Project.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Awareness-building and training on the new instruments would be useful to ABLE-funded agencies. Both Initial and Advanced CASAS training should continue to be made available to ABLE program staff.

Additional Comments:

Introduction

Purpose and Objectives of the Project

"Assessment Tools for Adult Education" continued, coordinated, and expanded two of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) funded assessment training and support initiatives operating in Pennsylvania during previous program years. The goal of the project was to increase opportunities for training and technical assistance on assessment issues to staff of ABLE-funded programs in order to help them engage in continuous quality improvement and meet the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act. The focus of the project was to provide training and support to staff of ABLE-funded programs to help them utilize assessment tools and procedures to effectively document learning gains of the adult students they serve. The original project objectives were:

1. To adapt and pilot test appropriate assessment procedures and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) suitable for use with short-term learners in three programs;
2. To identify assessment tools and develop training on those tools, as appropriate, based on the results of the '98 – '99 "ABLE Assessment Practices" project findings and needs resulting from the establishment of the CareerLink system;
3. To implement training and provide technical assistance on appropriate assessment tools;
4. To provide training, support, and technical assistance, and capacity-building for use of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) by ABLE providers;

5. To coordinate training implementation and provision of technical assistance with the Training Module Project.

Rationale for and Background of the Project

During the '97 – '98 and '98 – '99 program years, the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit's Adult Education and Job Training Center (AEJTC) implemented the Training Module Project. This project developed several training modules designed to increase program staff's knowledge of basic assessment concepts and how to use standardized assessments and their resulting data to document learning gains of adult students. These modules included a basic 12-hour "Assessment for Adult Learners" module, as well as a "Hands-on Session with the TABE" module and a "Hands-on Session with the BEST" module (each approximately 3 hours). The "Assessment for Adult Learners" module provides an opportunity for participants to review and work several Bureau-recommended standardized assessments. while the "hands-on" sessions provide participants with an in-depth look at and step-by-step guidelines for administering, scoring, interpreting, and reporting results of the instrument of focus. The project also established a system for delivery of these training modules through Pennsylvania's six regional ABLE professional development centers and trained a group of experienced and knowledgeable assessment trainers who continue to deliver the modules throughout the six regions.

Another project completed by the AEJTC in the '98 – '99 program year ("ABLE Assessment Practices") researched the assessment instruments that were being used by ABLE-funded providers for reporting student learning gains to the Bureau of ABLE and recommended a short list of standardized instruments

appropriate for tracking gains of learners in ABLE programs. This project revealed that the majority of ABLE-funded programs were finding this short list of standardized instruments adequate for at least some instructional planning as well as reporting purposes. However, the project documented the need for instruments that would better detect instructional needs and educational gains of three sub-populations of ABLE learners:

* Beginning-level adult readers;

* Adult learners focusing on a specific career area (e.g. nursing) rather than on general, employment-related literacy skills: and

* Upper-level ESL learners who have progressed beyond the functional level measured by the Basic English Skills Test (BEST).

The project collected information and reviewed standardized instruments potentially appropriate for these areas of need, and provided recommendations for instruments that might meet these needs. These included:

* The Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, beginning-level adult readers;

* The Wonderlic Basic Skills Test, career-focus learners;

* The CASAS Employability Competency and Life Skills Systems (not widely used by Pennsylvania ABLE practitioners at the time) and the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP), upper-level ESL learners.

A third AEJTC project funded in '98 – '99 ("Project Learner Goals") explored the assessment and instructional needs of short-term or "project" learners who come to ABLE agencies with specific short-term learning goals in mind (e.g., preparation to

take the commercial driver's license exam). These learners may quickly meet their instructional goals and leave the program. Because of their short time within programs and highly-focused goals, standardized testing is not appropriate for documenting their learning gains. Thus, this research explored how agencies can document service to these learners, developed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to provide the Bureau of ABLE with information on students engaging in project learning, and identified three structured approaches to informal assessment that may work with project learners, including:

* Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS);

* Oregon's Assessment, Instruction, and Mastery (AIM); and

* Informal assessment procedures being developed by the National Institute for Literacy's "Equipped for the Future" initiative.

A fourth training initiative carried out by the AEJTC in the '97 - '98 and '98 – '99 project years was statewide training in the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Employability Competency and Life Skills Systems. As part of this training initiative, ABLE-funded agencies participated in a basic level training that introduced the two systems and provided information needed to purchase and use the systems within ABLE programs. A level-two training was offered to agencies that chose to adopt CASAS and needed additional support in implementation. In addition, regional trainers-in-training participated in an apprenticeship training process for certification as state-level CASAS trainers.

The current project proposed to continue and coordinate these various initiatives by developing training for appropriate new standardized instruments (with

the support and approval of the Bureau of ABLE) through the Training Module Project; expanding training opportunities for CASAS and continuing to develop state-based CASAS trainers through the Training Module Project; and continuing to research potential techniques assessment and instruction of short-term "project learners" by adapting and pilot-testing the IEP and assessment techniques in agencies serving such learners.

Change of Project Focus

Two major changes were made in the project scope of work during the program year.

First, the project staff learned in Spring, 2000, after the proposal for this project was submitted, that the new federal National Reporting System (NRS) guidelines, scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2000, did not provide a category for short-term or project learners other than "work-based project learners." The NRS defines the work-based project learner as one who participates in a short-term (12 – 30 hours of duration) instructional program designed to teach specific work-based skills. In light of the orientation of the NRS toward project learners, the "Framework for Work-based Foundation Skills" and "PA Win" projects, being conducted by the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy in the '99 – '00 project year, seemed to provide a better foundation for continued work with assessment and instruction of project learners. In May, 1999, the AEJTC project staff, the staff of the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy associated with the "PA Win" and "Work-based Foundation Skills" projects, and Bureau of ABLE staff met and determined to continue the work with assessment and instruction of work-based project learners

under the auspices of the two Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy projects. Since the AEJTC staff involved in the project were also on the advisory team to the "PA Win" and "Work-based Foundation Skills" projects in the '99 – '00 project year, the transfer of this work to the Institute's projects would be seamless.

Second, at the first meeting of the project staff and Cheryl Keenan, Director of the Bureau of ABLE, in August, 1999, the group decided to use the program year to pilot-test three new instruments identified through the "ABLE Assessment Practices" project (SLEP, Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, and Wonderlic Basic Skills Test) in ABLE programs before adopting the instruments for learner gain data reporting or developing training on the instruments. The group decided that any decision on whether to adopt any or all of the instruments for learner gain data reporting, and any plans to develop training on administration, scoring, interpreting, and reporting of the instruments, would be deferred until after the completion of the pilot test in the '99 – '00 project year. A fourth instrument, Work Keys, was added to the list of instruments to pilot test. The Work Keys assessments had not been reviewed as part of the ABLE Assessment Practices research project; because the tests are highly secure, the researcher was unable to obtain actual samples of the tests or detailed technical information about them. However, the Bureau of ABLE located an independent source of information indicating that the Work Keys assessments met the criteria established by the research project for being identified as a standardized instrument appropriate for tracking gains of learners in ABLE programs. The project team believed that the Work Keys assessments might be beneficial to ABLE agencies that were beginning to work with their local CareerLinks.

Thus. the first project objective (To adapt and pilot test appropriate assessment procedures and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) suitable for use with short term learners in three programs) and third project objective (To implement training and provide technical assistance on newly-identified appropriate assessment tools) were deleted from the scope of work. The second project objective (To identify assessment tools and develop training on those tools, as appropriate, based on the results of the '98 – '99 "ABLE Assessment Practices" project findings and needs resulting form the establishment of the CareerLink system) was modified to focus only on identification of appropriate new assessment instruments through a pilot test of the instruments. The revised project objectives were therefore as follows:

1. To pilot test promising candidate standardized instruments for potential addition to the Bureau's list of standardized instruments allowable for reporting adult student learning gain data;

2. To provide training, support, technical assistance, and capacity-building for use of CASAS by ABLE providers; and

3. To coordinate implementation of training and technical assistance with the Training Module Project.

Project Time Frame

Project staff and Bureau of ABLE staff planned the pilot test in August 1999. Agencies were informed of the pilot and invited to participate in Fall 1999. Agencies were notified of their acceptance into the pilot in November 1999.

The pilot continued through Summer 2000, with project staff providing communication, support, and technical assistance to participating agencies. The

results of the pilot test were analyzed in Summer 2000. Bureau of ABLE staff and the project staff consulted and agreed that the three instruments tested through the pilot were useful for and useable by a variety of ABLE agencies for a variety of purposes, including reporting learner gain data. The Bureau of ABLE decided to add the instruments to their list of standardized assessment tools accepted for reporting adult student learning gain data. Project staff conducted necessary follow-up activities (e.g., developing draft educational gain standards, working with ABLE Net to modify the Literacy Pro data management software to include built-in specifications on the new instruments) in August and September 2000.

Planning of '99 – '00 CASAS training and capacity-building activities occurred in late '99 and early '00. Five CASAS training sessions were completed throughout Pennsylvania in Spring and Summer 2000. Support and technical assistance for ABLE-funded programs interested in CASAS or using CASAS was ongoing through the '99 – '00 program year.

Project Staff and Key Personnel

Carol Shefrin was the Project Director. She has over 15 years of experience in directing adult programs for the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit and developing and implementing special projects. She has directed large-scale special projects focusing on developing and implementing statewide training initiatives, including family literacy training and the Training Module Project. Other special projects she has directed have focused on research and development of assessment tools and practices. She co-authored, along with Lori Forlizzi and Barbara Van Horn, the "Assessment for Adult Learners" training module being delivered throughout the state as part of the

ABLE-funded Training Module Project. She directed all project activities, oversaw fiscal management of the project, and assisted in planning the pilot test in conjunction with the Bureau of ABLE.

The project's Training Coordinator was Dehra Shafer. She has many years of experience in adult education program and conference planning and has coordinated the Training Module Project. For the last two years, she has coordinated all of the ABLE-funded special project training initiatives (with the exception of family literacy training) that have been administered through the AEJTC. As part of the current project, she coordinated planning and implementation of the CASAS training through the Training Module Project.

Lori Forlizzi was Trainer/Training Developer for the project. She has four years of experience in developing training on assessment topics and providing statewide training and technical assistance on assessment issues to ABLE-funded programs statewide. She is the lead assessment trainer for the Training Module Project, and authored or co-authored several of the assessment modules delivered under the auspices of that project, including "Assessment for Adult Learners," "Hands-on Session with the TABE," and "Hands-on Session with the BEST." She is the also the lead state-level trainer for CASAS in Pennsylvania, and is the Assessment Strand Lead Trainer for the EQUAL initiative. She has provided consultation on assessment issues to the Bureau of ABLE. She was the lead researcher on the "ABLE Assessment Practices" project. She planned and coordinated the pilot test and related activities, including communication with and provision of technical assistance to the pilot sites. She assisted in planning the statewide CASAS training offerings. She

facilitated three of the CASAS training sessions offered as part of the project and provided information and technical assistance on CASAS to ABLE-funded agencies.

Audience for this Report

The audience for this report primarily includes staff of the ABLE Bureau and staff of ABLE-funded programs.

Project Dissemination

Copies of this report will be filed permanently at the following locations:

1) Pennsylvania Department of Education. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

333 Market Street, 12th Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

2) AdvancE State Literacy Resource Center

333 Market Street, 11th Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Statement of the Problem

"Assessment Tools for Adult Education" thus continued, coordinated, and expanded two of the ABLE-funded assessment training and support initiatives operating in Pennsylvania during previous program years. The goal of the project remained to increase opportunities for training and technical assistance on assessment issues to staff of ABLE-funded programs in order to help them engage in continuous quality improvement and meet the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act. The focus of the project remained to provide training and support to staff of ABLE-funded programs to help them utilize assessment tools and procedures to effectively

document learning gains of the adult students they serve. The project 1) pilot-tested candidate assessment instruments for possible adoption by the Bureau of ABLE for reporting of learner gains by its funded programs; 2) expanded training opportunities for CASAS through the Training Module Project; and 3) continued development of state-based CASAS trainers through the Training Module Project.

Project Goals and Objectives

The revised project objectives were as follows:

1. To pilot test promising candidate standardized instruments for potential addition to the Bureau's list of standardized instruments allowable for reporting adult student learning gain data;
2. To provide training, support, technical assistance, and capacity-building for use of CASAS by ABLE providers; and
3. To coordinate implementation of training and technical assistance with the Training Module Project.

Procedures Employed

"Assessment Tools for Adult Education" was conducted as two separate mini-projects: one pursuing the pilot test of candidate standardized instruments, the other the continuation expansion of statewide CASAS training through the Training Module Project. The procedures for each mini-project are detailed under the appropriate objective in the "Objectives Achieved" section below.

Objectives Achieved

Objective 1: To pilot test promising candidate standardized instruments for potential addition to the Bureau's list of standardized instruments allowable for reporting adult student learning gain data.

In August, 1999, the project staff met with Cheryl Keenan, Director of the Bureau of ABLE, and decided to devote the project year to a pilot-test of four candidate instruments: SLEP, Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, Wonderlic Basic Skills Test, and Work Keys assessments. Two purposes of the pilot test were established:

1. To assess the appropriateness of each instrument for use with targeted populations of learners in ABLE-funded agencies, and
2. To collect pre- and post-test data that would allow standards for learning gains to be established, should the pilot test be successful and the instruments be adopted.

In August, 1999, the Trainer/Training Developer drafted an agency application form for the pilot test. The form was finalized in late August after input by the Project Director and Bureau staff (see Appendix A). It was distributed to agencies in September as an attachment to the '99 – '00 ABLE Assessment Policy, and as a handout at the EQUAL regional kickoff sessions in September. The application form, to be submitted to the Bureau no later than September 30, 1999, described the purposes of the pilot test; gave a brief description of each of the four instruments; and asked agencies, for each instrument they wished to pilot test, to indicate whether they a) had used the instrument prior to the project year and b) currently had someone on staff who had received training on the instrument. The

Trainer/Training developer was listed on the form as the contact for questions about the instruments and the pilot test. During September and October, she fielded related questions from interested agencies.

In late October, the Bureau forwarded all submitted applications to the Project Director and Trainer/Training Developer. They worked with the Bureau of ABLE to identify the pilot sites. No agencies volunteered to pilot test Work Keys, and so it was dropped from the pilot.

The project team identified the following criteria for acceptance into the pilot:

* All SLEP and Wonderlic Basic Skills Test applicants would be accepted, as both instruments were straightforward to administer and interpret.

* Pilot test applicants for the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised would be accepted if the agency had previously used the tests or had someone on staff that had previously received training on the tests. This requirement was set for two reasons. First, the testing process utilized in standardized administration of these tests is individualized and requires the test administrator to engage in on-line decision-making. In addition, the project team felt that training on the instrument could not be developed and implemented widely before the start of the pilot test. Thus, the team felt that restricting acceptance to those who had training on or experience with the tests was warranted.

In early November, 1999, letters notifying each applicant agency of its status with the pilot (accepted/not accepted into the pilot) were mailed from the Bureau of ABLE. Acceptance letters indicated that while test materials and training on use of the instruments would not be available as part of the pilot, technical assistance and

support was available to each participating agency from the Trainer/Training Developer. Six agencies applied to pilot the Wonderlic Basic Skills Test and all were accepted into the pilot. Seven agencies applied to pilot test the SLEP and all were accepted. Nine agencies applied to pilot the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised; six were accepted into the pilot. The three agencies not accepted into the Woodcock pilot did not have training or experience with the instrument.

Three agencies dropped out of the pilot test of the Wonderlic during the program year. In the case of one program, an arrangement that would have made it feasible to use the instrument fell through. In the case of the second program, an agency-wide reorganization had occurred; this, coupled with a staff shortage, made it impossible for the agency to continue to use the instrument. In the case of the third program, the agency decided that the instrument did not meet the needs of the population. One agency dropped out of the pilot test of the SLEP because the test materials were not provided as part of the pilot. Thus, the final number of agencies piloting each of the instruments was as follows:

SLEP: 6

Wonderlic Basic Skills Test: 3

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised: 5

A list of the agencies participating in the pilot is included in Appendix B.

In late November and December 1999, the Trainer/Training Developer worked with the staff of ABLE Net to inform pilot agencies of how the pilot test data would be collected through the Literacy Pro (LitPro) software. In November, the Trainer/Training drafted and mailed letters to the pilot agencies that summarized the

data that could be collected and reported for each instrument, including the allowable subtests/subtest combinations, types of scores to be reported (e.g., raw, scaled, grade level equivalent), and how learner gain would be calculated (i.e., through scaled scores). Linda Hinman from ABLE Net reviewed these letters before they were sent to ensure that any LitPro needs were covered. In December, ABLE Net staff drafted and mailed, to participating agencies, directions for modifying LitPro to enter the data from the pilot assessments. The Trainer/Training Developer reviewed these directions before they were mailed to the pilot sites.

In March 2000 (once programs would presumably have had a chance to begin using the tests) and July 2000 (once assessment data for the program year had been submitted), the Trainer/Training Developer contacted each pilot site to check on their progress and to determine if there were any problems or needs to be addressed. She also responded to requests for assistance generated by the pilot agencies. There were very few of these requests, and generally they related to how to obtain and use the tests (i.e., requests for contact information for test publisher, one question about how many/which alternative forms to purchase and use, and one question on how to use norms tables).

In both March and July, the Trainer/Training Developer prepared open-ended interview questions and conducted telephone interviews with the sites. Thirteen of the fourteen pilot sites participated in the March interview (one Woodcock site did not participate in the interview). The March interview included the following questions:

* Have you started using the instrument?

* What programs are you using the instrument in? What types of students are you using it with?

* How many students have taken a pre-test with this instrument in this fiscal year?

* How many students have taken a post-test with this instrument in this fiscal year?

* Are students making gains from pre- to post-test? What do the gains look like?

* Who is administering the instrument – teachers, counselors, test administrators, others? Are they having any difficulties administering the instrument?

* Who is scoring/interpreting the results of the instrument? Are they having any difficulties with this?

* Are you using the test results for purposes other than tracking/reporting learner gains (e.g., planning instruction)? If so, what are those other purposes?

* Is there any assistance I can give you or any questions I can answer at this time?

All pilot sites participated in the July interview. The July interview included the following questions:

* Are you administering the instrument to the same population? Describe any changes in the target population.

* Which subtests are you administering to your students? Which are you reporting to LitPro? How do you determine which subtests to administer? Which to report?

* How many students have taken a pre-test with this instrument this program year?

* How many students have taken a post-test with this instrument this program year?

* Are students making gains from pre-to post-test? If so, what is the average gain? How many instructional hours usually occur between pre- and post-test?

* Do any gains you are seeing with the instrument correlate with the progress you think your students are making (based on your "gut" reaction or other sources of information)?

* Are other or different staff now administering, scoring, or interpreting results of the instrument? Have any problems cropped up for anyone using the instrument?

* What purposes are you currently using the instrument for?

* Do you have any questions or need for assistance that I could help you with?

* Would you say that the instrument has been a successful tool for your program? Why or why not?

* Would you like to continue using the instrument in your program? Why? For what purposes?

During both interviews, agencies were encouraged to volunteer any other helpful information and observations outside of these questions.

The following paragraphs summarize the findings gleaned from the agency interviews. At the time of the interviews, sites were unsure of the average gains that their learners were making, or of the number of instructional hours attained.

The five sites that piloted the Woodcock were, for the most part, using it with beginning level literacy learners in a one-to-one tutoring setting (however, one site also provided small group and classroom instruction; a second site administered it to learners reading up to the 7th grade level). One site was using the instrument with developmentally disabled learners. Two sites reported pre-testing very small numbers of learners (5 each) and had not collected any post-test data by the time of

the July interview. The third site reported about 40 pre/post-test matches: the fourth about 70; and the fifth was unsure.

All three Wonderlic pilot sites used the instrument with ABE/GED level learners in work preparation or job training classes; the learners at one site were adults with significant and chronic mental illness. One site reported five pre/post-test matches; the second, 51 pre/post-test matches; and the third was unsure of the number of students that had been pre and post-tested.

The six sites piloting the SLEP served ESL students from a variety of countries of origin, mostly intermediate and advanced level students. While one site also used the instrument with beginning level ESL learners, other sites reported that their teachers felt that this would be an inappropriate instrument to use with beginning level ESL learners. These sites varied in the numbers of students that they reported having SLEP pre- and post-test matches. The numbers of students pre- and post-tested by the six SLEP pilot sites are as follows: 51; 10; 265; 0; 17; 23.

Woodcock sites reported using the instrument for diagnosing learner needs, placing learners into instructional groups, and selecting instructional approaches and materials in addition to reporting gain scores to the Bureau of ABLE via LitPro. This is not surprising, as this instrument does provide rich diagnostic information on individual learners. Three SLEP sites reported using the test results for class or level placement; three reporting using it to try to glean information for instruction (but one reported finding that difficult in light of the information yielded by the tool). With the Wonderlic, two of the sites reported using the assessment results for class placement or for identifying learners who may have difficulties in an available level of classes.

Unlike the Woodcock, the SLEP and Wonderlic are not designed to provide detailed diagnostic information on learning needs.

Most Woodcock sites reported administering and reporting scores on all of the available subtests. They chose to do so, again, because they found the diagnostic information provided by a combination of the subtests extremely valuable. Most SLEP sites stated that they administered the individual subtests and reported the individual subtest scores. Most SLEP sites felt that the individual subtest scores provided more useful information about student progress than the overall total score. Reports from the Wonderlic sites indicated no clear pattern in what they chose to administer and report.

The pilot sites reported that a variety of types of staff administered, scored, and interpreted the instruments with virtually no problems. The types of staff who administered the tests included program directors, program coordinators, tutor/student coordinators, tutor trainers, office administrators, assessment specialists, teachers, an instructional assistant, an outreach coordinator, and a rehab coordinator. Only one agency (piloting the Woodcock) reported that the person administering the tests needed some assistance in getting started.

Woodcock sites reported that they felt that the instrument was successful for working with very beginning level literacy learners, as a tool for providing information useful in making diagnostic, placement, and instructional decisions. The site working with developmentally disabled learners was less enthusiastic; this site reported that the tool had worked better than the TABE with some (but not all) of their learners. All sites reported that they would like to continue to use the instrument

with at least some of their learners. Two out of the three Wonderlic sites felt that the tool had been successful in their agencies. They cited its brevity and ability to provide the type of information they need for a broad assessment of skills and learner gain data reporting. The third site was positive, but wanted to utilize the tool more before committing to continued use. With one exception, SLEP pilot sites indicated that they believed the SLEP had been a useful tool for their intermediate and advanced level students; they cited its simplicity and noted that it filled a need for a standardized reporting tool for ESL students at this level. Five of the six sites indicated that they would most likely continue to use the instrument for reporting; sites felt that with long-term use of the instrument, they could get a better sense of what the test results meant in terms of instructional planning. The dissenting site felt that the tool did not adequately match their curriculum, and felt that time it took to administer the test was too long. They were unsure as to whether they would continue using SLEP.

The pilot sites agreed that the Wonderlic and SLEP are simple enough to be picked up and used immediately by typical staff in ABLE programs. Those sites piloting the Woodcock felt that training or some sort of introductory overview of how to use the tests would be nice but not necessary. This is a bit surprising considering the nature of the Woodcock, and this finding should be interpreted cautiously as each of these pilot sites had some prior experience with or training in how to use the instrument.

In summary, the feedback from the pilot sites indicated that the instruments were usable by and beneficial to ABLE programs. Based on the these results from the

pilot test, the Bureau of ABLE decided during late Summer '00 to add the three instruments to its list of instruments accepted for reporting adult learner educational gains. Draft educational gain standards for each instrument would be developed based on the pilot pre- and post-test data submitted by the pilot sites to the Bureau via LitPro in July '00.

This step was completed in August 2000. At that time, ABLE Net supplied to the Trainer/Training Developer all available LitPro assessment data from the pilot. The Trainer/Training Developer analyzed the data and developed draft educational gain standards for the instruments to be included in the '00 – '01 ABLE Program Performance Standards document (see Appendix C). It should be noted that not all of the pilot sites had provided complete pre- and post-test data on the pilot instruments by that time; in addition, the data from sites serving special populations – developmentally disabled and mentally ill students – were reviewed but not used to calculate the draft educational gain standards.

During Summer of '00, the Trainer/Training Developer also worked with Linda Hinman of ABLE Net and Bill Murphy of the Bureau of ABLE to specify allowable subtests/subtest combinations and scale score ranges for the '00 – '01 version of LitPro. This step was necessary for specifications on the new instruments to be "hard-wired" into LitPro. Since the pilot instruments had not been widely used by ABLE agencies prior to the pilot year, during the pilot year sites had to manually specify pilot instrument subtest names in LitPro. There were no built-in restrictions or edit checks on scale score entry.

Final project activities related to the pilot test were completed in August and September '00. The Trainer/Training Developer assisted the Bureau in developing policy guidance on the three pilot instruments (regarding the appropriate populations for each instrument). She also developed reference values for placing learners into the National Reporting System Educational Functioning Levels based on scaled scores and worked with ABLE Net and the Bureau of ABLE to add these to Pennsylvania's Educational Functioning Level Reference Chart in the '00 – '01 ABLE data collection instructions manual published by ABLE Net.

Objective 2: To provide training, support, technical assistance, and capacity-building for use of CASAS by ABLE providers.

Preliminary planning for the '99 – '00 project year was conducted by the Training Coordinator, the Trainer/Training Developer and Linda Taylor, Pennsylvania's point of contact with the national office of CASAS, in Fall '99. In January 2000, the Training Coordinator and the Trainer/Training Developer conducted a telephone survey of ABLE programs to identify CASAS training needs. They contacted 24 ABLE-funded agencies that had purchased CASAS materials (the list of agencies was supplied by CASAS) to determine 1) whether the agency was using the Employability Competency and/or Life Skills systems, and 2) what, if any, CASAS training, technical assistance, or support needs the agency had. Through these telephone interviews, the project team identified 16 agencies using these CASAS systems, and determined the need for three initial level trainings (east, central, and west) and 2 advanced level trainings (east and west).

The following CASAS training sessions were completed during the '99 – '00 project year:

* Initial Implementation Training, 4/28/00, Pittsburgh: served 12 agencies (25 participants)

* Initial Implementation Training, 7/19/00, Philadelphia: served 12 agencies (21 participants)

* Initial Implementation Training, 7/20/00, Philadelphia: served 14 agencies (17 participants) – this was an additional (unplanned) session set up in the Philadelphia area in order to accommodate the overflow of registrations for the 7/19 session.

* Advanced Training, 5/16/00, Harrisburg: served 8 agencies (23 individuals)

* Advanced Training, 5/18/00, New Castle: served 9 agencies (14 individuals).

An additional Initial Training was scheduled, as a result of the telephone survey, for 9/14/00 in Wilkes Barre; this session was postponed until the next project year due to low registration numbers, but had been rescheduled for 10/19/00 by the end of the project.

The project also built capacity for in-state CASAS training and technical support for CASAS. CASAS requires that candidate state-level trainers-in-training complete a training apprenticeship in order to be certified as CASAS state-level trainers. By the '99 – '00 project year, Trainer/Training Developer had completed the certification process and was certified to facilitate training in the Employability Competency and Life Skills Systems. She facilitated the 4/28, 7/19, and 7/20 Initial Training sessions. Four additional Pennsylvania-based candidate trainers-in-training (Ellen McDevitt, Suzanne Webster, Susan Finn Miller, and Linda Wolfson) were

advanced in the apprenticeship requirements by observing and/or assisting with components of these sessions. Ardis Breslauer, a CASAS national-level trainer, facilitated the two Advanced Training sessions.

During the project year, the Trainer/Training Developer also provided technical assistance and support on issues related to CASAS to ABLE-funded agencies throughout the state. She provided information to interested agencies, helped to promote the training by word-of-mouth to interested agencies, and provided assistance regarding questions about selecting, purchasing, and implementing the CASAS Employability Competency and Life Skills systems.

The Training Coordinator organized and led a panel discussion session, entitled "Is CASAS for You?." at the February 2000 PAACE Midwinter Conference. The presentation included an introduction to the CASAS Employability Competency and Life Skills systems and possible applications of the systems. Four panelists from ABLE-funded agencies that were using these CASAS systems then provided an overview of how CASAS was being used in their agencies, why and how the decision was made to use CASAS, and the successes and challenges they had faced in its implementation. The panelists included the Training Coordinator, the Trainer/Training Developer, Susan Finn Miller of Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13, Barb Noel of Franklin County Literacy Council, Peggie Rood of Luzerne County Community College's ALTA Program, and Michael Westover of Catholic Charities.

Objective 3: To coordinate implementation of training and technical assistance with the Training Module Project.

The goals of the Training Module Project are to develop or adopt quality training on topics of interest to ABLE-funded agencies; to develop and maintain a delivery system for the training in conjunction with the ABLE-funded regional Professional Development Centers; and to train, monitor, and support regional trainers for each module topic. A clear need had been established to provide ABLE-funded agencies with information about and training on the CASAS Employability Competency and Life Skills systems, particularly as assessment tools that provide an option for assessing ESL learners at a wide range of ability levels, through the "ABLE Assessment Practices" project conducted in the '98 – '99 program year. All training and technical assistance activities around CASAS were smoothly integrated with ongoing Training Module Project activities. The Training Coordinator, assisted by the AEJTC's Training Team and the Trainer/Training Developer, planned and organized all five CASAS training sessions in the '99 – '00 program year in conjunction with the needs of agencies and Professional Development Centers in each region. CASAS trainers-in-training were observed, supported, and assisted by the Trainer/Training Developer.

Evaluation Techniques, Instruments, and Results

Throughout the pilot test, the project team worked closely with the Bureau, ABLE Net, and the pilot sites to monitor progress toward meeting the objective. The design of the pilot test ensured that the field contributed to identifying standardized assessment instruments that could be used to document the educational gains of adult

learners in ABLE populations. The open-ended interviews provided opportunity for pilot sites to make suggestions and provide feedback regarding the feasibility of the instruments and the pilot test itself.

The provision of training, technical assistance, and support around CASAS throughout the project benefited from the evaluation processes previously set up as an ongoing part of the Training Module Project. The Module Project evaluation protocol solicits evaluation information from trainers (via contact with the lead trainer), Professional Development Center staff (via contact with the Training Coordinator), and training participants (via an end-of training evaluation form and follow-up contact provided by the trainer). Informal correspondence with the Professional Development Centers and CASAS trainers and feedback from the training participants captured via the end-of-training evaluation form indicated that the CASAS training offerings were of high quality and met the needs of participating ABLE agencies.

Procedures for Dissemination of the Findings and Products

This final report will be disseminated through the AEJTC, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, ABLE's regional Professional Development Centers, and the AdvancE State Literacy Resource Center.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through this project, three additional assessment tools that are appropriate for assessing learning gains of adult students in ABLE-funded programs were identified and demonstrated to be usable by and useful for a variety of ABLE-funded agencies. These were added to the Bureau of ABLE's current list of standardized assessment

tools accepted for reporting learning gains of adult students in ABLE-funded programs. Results indicated that building awareness of the instruments and training on the instruments would be useful to ABLE-funded agencies. There may be a particular need to provide some training around the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised to those agencies that would like to use the instrument.

The project also demonstrated a high interest among ABLE-funded agencies in the CASAS Employability Competency and Life Skills assessment systems. Regional trainings on CASAS were well-attended and well-received. Furthermore, the CASAS training was smoothly integrated with the training and technical support system set up through the Training Module Project. Both the Initial and Advanced trainings should continue to be made available to the staff of ABLE-funded programs.

Appendix A:

Pilot Test Application Form

BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC & LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Trial Assessment Instrument Registration Form
Program Year 1999 -2000

In program year 1999-2000, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education invites funded agencies to register to pilot-test four standardized assessment instruments on a trial basis. The instruments are:

- ☐ The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised
- ☐ The Secondary Level English Proficiency Test
- ☐ The Wonderlic Basic Skills Test
- ☐ Work Keys assessments (delete pending relevant info. from Mike Snyder??)

The purpose of this pilot-test is two-fold:

1. To assess the appropriateness of the instruments for use with certain populations of learners in ABLE-funded agencies;
2. To collect pre- and post-test data that would allow standards for learner gains to be established should the pilot-test be successful and the instruments be adopted for reporting learner gains on a permanent basis.

Agencies interested in registration for the pilot-test should complete the following and submit, *no later than September 30, 1999*, to:

PA Department of Education
Bureau of Adult Basic & Literacy Education
333 Market Street, 12th Floor,
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333 -- fax: 717-783-0583

Agencies will be contacted to inform them of their approval status.

Agency Name: _____
Director's Name: _____
Address: _____
_____
Telephone: _____
FAX: _____
e-mail: (if used on a regular basis): _____

Indicate which of the four instruments you will be pilot-testing; for each, answer the accompanying questions regarding the instrument.

___ *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised*

Description: Individually-administered diagnostic instrument appropriate for measuring skills of adult beginning readers (word identification, word attack, word comprehension, and passage comprehension).

_____ Contract number(s) under which you will use the instrument

☐Y ☐N We have used this instrument prior to this fiscal year.

☐Y ☐N Someone on staff has received formal training on this instrument.

_ *Secondary Level English Proficiency Test*

Description: Measures secondary-level English language skills in listening comprehension and reading comprehension; may be group or individually administered.

_____ Contract number(s) under which you will use the instrument

☐Y ☐N We have used this instrument prior to this fiscal year.

☐Y ☐N Someone on staff has received formal training on this instrument.

__ *Wonderlic Basic Skills Test*

Description: Measures basic reading and math skills of adult learners at the upper-ABE and GED skill range; results can be compared to the basic skills requirements of occupations listed in the U. S. Department of Labor's "Dictionary of Occupational Titles." Requires computer scoring with a disk provided by Wonderlic, Inc. (IBM or compatible computer). May be group or individually administered.

_____ Contract number(s) under which you will use the instrument

☐Y ☐N We have used this instrument prior to this fiscal year.

☐Y ☐N Someone on staff has received formal training on this instrument.

_ *Work Keys assessments*

Description: Eight available instruments measure listening, reading for information, writing, applied mathematics, applied technology, locating information, observation, and teamwork.

_____ Contract number(s) under which you will use the instrument

☐Y ☐N We have used this instrument prior to this fiscal year.

☐Y ☐N Someone on staff has received formal training on this instrument.

Questions regarding the registration process and assessment instruments should be directed to:

Lori Forlizzi
South Central Professional Development Center
Tuscarora Intermediate Unit
Telephone (717) 248-4942
email - forlizzi@sprynet.com

Appendix B:

Agencies Participating in the Pilot Test

Agencies pilot testing the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised:

Community Action, Inc., Punxsutawney
Crawford County Literacy Council, Inc., Meadville
Focus on Renewal Sto-Rox Neighborhood Corporation, McKees Rocks
Programs Employing People, Philadelphia
The Literacy Council of Mercer County, Greenville

Agencies pilot testing the Wonderlic Basic Skills Test:

Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5, Edinboro
Stairways Behavioral Health, Erie
Tri-County Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc., Harrisburg

Agencies pilot testing the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test:

Bradford County Library (Bradford-Wyoming County Literacy Program), Troy
Community Learning Center, Philadelphia
Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13, Lancaster
New World Association, Philadelphia
Pittsburgh School District (Connelley Technical Institute), Pittsburgh
Volunteer English Program in Chester County, West Chester

Appendix C:

Draft Educational Gain Standards for the Pilot Instruments

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised: an increase of 10 W (scale) score points on the Total Reading Cluster-Full Scale.

Secondary Level English Proficiency Test: an increase of 2 scale score points on the Reading Comprehension subtest, or 2 scale score points on the Listening Comprehension subtest.

Wonderlic Basic Skills Test: an increase of 25 total (scale) score points on the Verbal Skills subtest, or 25 total (scale) score points on the Quantitative Skills subtest.